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THE EFFECT OF FORCED COUNSELING--INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP--WITH STUDENTS TRANSFERRING INTO THE GENERAL COLLEGE ON PROBATION.

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SUBJECTS FOR THIS STUDY WERE 60 RANDOMLY SELECTED LOW ACHIEVING UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA STUDENTS WHO HAD TRANSFERRED FROM 4-YEAR CURRICULUMS TO THE 2-YEAR GENERAL COLLEGE. ONE GROUP OF 20 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN SIX WEEKLY INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS WITH ASSIGNED COUNSELORS, A SECOND GROUP OF 20 MET IN SIX 50-MINUTE GROUP COUNSELING SESSIONS, AND THE 20-MEMBER CONTROL GROUP RECEIVED NO COUNSELING. WHILE THE INDIVIDUALLY COUNSELED GROUP EARNED THE HIGHEST GRADE POINT AVERAGE AND THE CONTROL GROUP WAS LOWEST, INTERGROUP DIFFERENCES WERE NOT SIGNIFICANT AT THE .05 CONFIDENCE LEVEL. ALTHOUGH STUDENTS' PREDICTIONS OF THEIR OWN GRADE AVERAGES FOLLOWED THE SAME TREND, WITH THE INDIVIDUALLY COUNSELED STUDENTS SHOWING THE GREATEST SUCCESS AND THE CONTROL GROUP THE LEAST, DIFFERENCES AMONG GROUPS WERE NOT SIGNIFICANT. A FOLLOWUP STUDY TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE COUNSELING PROCESS HAD LONG RANGE EFFECTS ALSO SHOWED NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES. THE AUTHORS CONCLUDE THAT SHORT TERM FORCED COUNSELING IS NOT EFFECTIVE IN DEALING WITH "UNDERACHIEVEMENT" PROBLEMS. THIS DOCUMENT IS VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2 OF "THE GENERAL COLLEGE STUDIES," 1965-66. (WO)

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THE EFFECT OF FORCED COUNSELING - INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP - WITH STUDENTS TRANSFERRING INTO THE GENERAL COLLEGE ON PROBATION

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A factor in the original design of the general education curriculum of the General College was the recognition that a distressingly high proportion of college students who entered a four year curriculum failed to complete requirements for a baccalaureate degree. Structured as it is for the non-specialist, for students who wish to explore untried fields as well as those who wish to pursue already established interests, the General College through the years has found itself also serving the needs of the underachiever - the student who, as judged by the usual measurements, qualified for admittance to pre-professional schools and colleges, but who fails to measure up to his potential. At the beginning of every academic term, General College admittance officers must process applications submitted by students who wish to transfer into the General College because they were dropped for academic reasons from other units of the University. How to deal with the needs of this special group of students is a problem the College has had to deal with since its inception. A report of one project involving "transfer-in" students constitutes this issue of The General College Studies.

Dr. Kingsley and Dr. Scheller point out that although the number of students involved in their study was relatively small, the sample represents a significant part of the total General College student body. In many ways the General College is not a typical junior college. The problem of the underachiever, however, is frequently encountered. Results of the experimentation reported here, therefore, may well prove useful to any academic institution seeking to improve its student counseling services.

The study described in this paper is number 29 in the current series of research projects carried out by the Division of Student Personnel Services in the General College.

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INFORMATION

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The terms "rehabilitation" and "salvage" have been employed in reference to the role played by the General College in admitting students who have not had academic success in other colleges. The "rehabilitation" role of the General College is by no means a minor one. During the 1961-62 academic year, for example, the College admitted on probation, 361 students from other units within the University. Low achievement resulting in "drop" is the primary factor which precipitates transfer to the General College from other colleges within the University. Transfer students, by the very fact that they were initially admitted by other colleges of the University with admission requirements far more rigid than those of the General College, invariably are in the upper ten percent of the General College student body in terms of those measures which purport to indicate academic potential. Many of these students are eventually "rehabilitated" in that they achieve academic success in the General College and/or they gain some insight into the causes or reasons for their previous failures. Others, however, are less successful. While past research on "underachievers" makes the prognosis for this group rather dim, the General College's role as "salvager" must be evaluated, and ways to improve the academic prognosis must be studied and tried.

THE STUDY

The Problem

This project was undertaken to assess one method of imrpoving the College's "salvage" function. The principal technique tested is that of counseling transfer students. Counseling was chosen since it seemed to be a potentially useful to modify and improve the academic behavior

of transfer students, behavior which, up to the time of their transfer, had not been academically fruitful.

It was known that transfer students generally do not avail themselves of the counseling services available in the college. This study, therefore, was an evaluation of "forced counseling". While forced counseling is not carried on in the ideal therapeutic climate, as a method it is, nevertheless, worth evaluating.

Selection of Students

The population for this study was a group of 115 students who had transferred to the General College from the College of Liberal Arts; as transfer students, all of them were admitted on probation for the Spring Quarter, 1963. There were two basic reasons for selecting this particular group: (1) it constituted approximately eighty-two per cent of the total number of transfers into the General College from within the University; and (2) the factors of original admission policy, probation and drop policy, and to a large extent, curriculum and faculty, were common to all in this group prior to transfer. The subjects included in this study were randomly selected from this population.

Procedure

During the transfer-in orientation meetings, the students transferring from the College of Liberal Arts were informed of the possibility of their being involved in an experiment which would necessitate their keeping the fourth hour on Thursdays free of any classes, or of any other commitment. No further comments were made regarding the experiment at that time. Each student was asked to read and sign a statement agreeing to cooperate in the event that he was selected to participate in the study.

On the basis of an alphabetized list, the students were randomly divided into thirds; from each of the three groups, twenty individuals were randomly selected to comprise. (1) experimental group one (Group I); (2) experimental group two (Group II); and (3) the control group (Group III).

A letter was sent to each student in experimental group one requesting that he come to the counseling office to arrange for counseling appointments. Five students were assigned randomly to each of four counselors in the General College Counseling Office.

Another letter was sent to each of the twenty students comprising experimental group two requesting the student to come to a specific room during the fourth period on the following Thursday.

I Counseling (Individual)

Each student in Group I had a series of six weekly sessions with the assigned counselor. Except for the sixth appointment, all counseling sessions were half-hour periods. There was no attempt made to structure the counseling sessions for the counselors. Each of the four counselors was free to handle the sessions according to his own dictates. The sixth meeting, however, was an hour in length and was devoted to the student's completing the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes.

II Counseling (Group)

The twenty students in Group II met as a group, with a fifth member of the counseling staff, for six consecutive Thursdays during the 50-minute fourth-hour class period. While these meetings were considered as guidance sessions, the methods employed and the atmosphere engendered approximated a small class situation rather than a "group counseling" situation.

The students were asked to express and discuss their feelings about being "dropped" and about being in the General College; their reasons for their academic difficulties, and their original and modified educational goals. Time schedules, study techniques and other topics frequently covered in "How to Study" courses were touched upon. Limited written assignments were made to be done in and out of class in an effort to encourage in the students a clearer understanding of what they had done, academically and vocationally, what they were doing and what they intended to do. The Mooney Problem Check List was used to assist them in their own self-evaluations.

The sixth meeting, as with Group I, was devoted to the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes.

RESULTS

The main hypothesis of the study to be tested was that there would be no differences in actual numberic grade averages (NGA) attained by the three groups on their academic work in the Spring Quarter, 1963.

Table I

Mean Numeric Grade Averages (NGA) for Spring Quarter for Three Groups

		Mean NGA
Group I	(Indiv. Couns.)	7.19
Group II	(Group Couns.)	6.89
Group III	(Control)	6.48

Differences were tested and found not to be significant at the .05 level.

Several subsidiary hypotheses were checked. The first of these was that counselors would not be able to predict grades with any more accuracy than their clients; also that no differences would exist in the predictive accuracy of these three groups of students. Each of the counselors of the individually counseled students and the students themselves were asked to predict grades in each of the courses taken. The same predictions were also made by students in the group sessions and in the control group, although not, of course, by the counselor in charge of the group sessions. Table II gives these results.

Table II

Mean Predicted and Actual NGA of the three Groups

	Gp I	Gp II	Gp III
Student Predicted NGA	7.02	7.09	7.39
Counselor Predicted NGA	6.59		
(Actual Grades Obtained	7.19	6.89	6.48)

Table III shows the mean percentage of "hits and misses" made by the counselors of Group I and students in the three groups. A "hit" was defined as being within one numeric score (plus or minus) of the actual score attained.

Table III

Mean Percentage of "Hits and Misses"

	Hits	Misses
	%	%
Counselors	53	47
Group I	67	33
Group II	60	40
Group III	56	44

The "misses" were also tabulated to show the direction of the error; i.e., whether the incorrect predictions were higher or lower than the actual numeric grade attained. Table IV gives these results.

Table IV

Mean Precentage of Incorreet
Predictions by Direction of Error

	% Predicted	
	Hi	Lo
Counselors	41	59
Group I	42	58
Group II	75	25
Group III	78	22

None of the differences in the three preceding tables was significant at the .05 level.

Differences among the abilities of the counselors to predict their client's grades ranged from thirty-three per cent accuracy to seventy-eight per cent accuracy.

The last hypothesis tested, and accepted, was that no differences in the scores on the Brown-Holtzman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes would exist among the three groups of students. Table V gives these results.

Table V

Mean Scores for Three Groups on Brown-Holtzman

Gp I	32.3
Gp II	33.0
GGp III	34.2

DISCUSSION

Although none of the hypotheses studied was rejected, several observations can be made. The direction of the findings in several cases is indicative: conceivably with a larger N, the findings would be significant. Such a possibility seems to be suggested by Tables I and IV. It would appear that the students individually counseled were somewhat more realistic about the kinds of grades they would get and also were more "pessimistic" when they made an incorrect prediction.

A follow-up study seems in order; hopefully, there might be some long range effects of the counseling, such as persistence,or, perhaps, further grade improvement. It would be useful, at any rate, to follow the academic progress of the three groups during the 1963-64 academic year.

A "fringe" idea explored involved the following procedure: six students having a NGA of less than 5.0 were compared with six students having a NGA of more than 9.0. These students were selected without

regard to the experimental group that they were in. The following table shows variables checked and the results. Al results are means.

Variable	5.0 NGA	9.0 NGA
Qters. in CLA	2.0	3.5
Honor Points Down	37.0	29.1
HSR	69.2	50.0
MSAT	42.5	52.2
Eng.	63.2	51.2
Brown-Holtzman	30.5	37.3

Probably the most obvious feature of these two groups is the difference in number of quarters in the College of Liberal Arts before effecting transfer. Each of the 5.0 group had spent exactly two quarters in CLA, only one of the 9.0 group had spent less than three quarters. Also noteworthy is the fact that the students with the best grades (the 9.0 NGA Gp) have lower percentile ranks on two of the three "predictors" -- HSR and Eng.

FOLLOW-UP

The following section of the paper summarizes information garnered in a follow-up of the preceding three groups of students. These data were obtained from the students' files at the start of Fall Quarter, 1964.

It was found that six students, two from each of the three groups, had not completed the Spring, 1963, quarter, and did not register in any succeeding quarter.

Table VI gives a summary of the academic progress of the remaining students in the three groups for the 1963-64 academic year.

TABLE VI

Fall Quarter 1963

	N Registered	% of Original Gp (N=20)	Mean G.C. Credit Load	Mean G.C. NGA	N with Comb. Courses	Mean GPA in Comb. Courses
1. Individ. Couns.	12	60	12.40	7.25	2	2.35
2. Gp. Couns.	10	50	11.30	7.07	3	1.17
3. Control	11	55	12.00	6.64	6	1.20

Winter Quarter 1964

1. Individ. Couns.	12	60	11.75	6.72	6	1.25
2. Gp. Couns.	10	50	11.90	6.90	3	2.33
3. Control	12	60	10.10	6.65	7	2.01

Spring Quarter 1964

1. Individ. Couns.	10	50	11.60	7.26	5	2.46
2. Gp. Couns.	8	40	10.00	6.20	4	2.37
3. Control	9	45	7.88	7.35	8	1.78

Several comments can be made about these data. It is probable that many of the Spring, 1963, transfer-ins applied for transfer to the General College merely to finish out the academic year, since approximately only half of these students returned for the 1963-1964 school year. No differences among the three groups were significant for any of the variables studied. Most of the students attained a high "C" average in their General College work. Some differences among the groups in combination course grades approached significance. The individually counseled students had, on the average better success than the control group in combination courses. Only 37 percent of the students from both counseled groups attempted combination courses, as compared to 67 percent of the control group members. Of practical significance is the fact that the mean grade (1.8) of all combination courses for all students in the samples is below a "C" average; that is, transfer students on the whole continued their earlier practice of losing grade points in courses outside the General College.

Analysis of the information in student files also reveals the following:

(1) One of the sixty students originally in the three samples transferred as of Fall Quarter, 1964, to Elementary Education, her original goal.

(2) Eight of the sixty students (13 per cent) have graduated with an AA degree. An additional eight students are registered for Fall Quarter, 1964, and will meet the credit requirements for the AA degree at the end of the quarter. Thus, using graduation as a criterion, we note that the proportion of transfer-in students who obtain the AA degree is

roughly equivalent to the proportion of non-transfer students who graduate with the AA degree.

Several tentative conclusions can be summarized here. The study gives some evidence that short term forced counseling is not effective in dealing with problems of "underachievement". Whether this lack of effectiveness is primarily due to the brevity of the contacts, the forced aspect of the counseling, or to some other factor(s), is unknown.

Negative predictions that are generally made by counselors regarding the improbability of students retransferring to their original colleges are firmly buttressed by the evidence found here. The fact that transfer-in students, on the average, continue to lose grade points also suggests that students' reasons for taking combination courses should be scrutinized closely by counselors and registration advisers.